Prepared for Growth:
BUILDING ALBERTA'S LABOUR SUPPLY

Labour Force Planning Committee

October 2001

Alberta
GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

The Labour Force Planning Committee is led by Alberta Human Resources and Employment and includes representatives from the provincial ministries of:

- Economic Development
- Learning
- Health and Wellness
- Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Finance
- Innovation and Science
- Children's Services
- Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development
- Seniors.

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INTRODUCTION

Alberta is enjoying the strongest economic growth of any province in Canada. Managing that growth is a constant challenge for the Government of Alberta and its community and industry partners.

Alberta needs an adequate supply of workers with the right mix of knowledge and skills. Are we maximizing the skills, talents and knowledge of our existing labour force? Do we, and will we in the future, have enough trades people, health professionals, teachers, researchers and other educated and skilled workers to meet the demands of growing industries and an expanding population?

Government plays a key role in supporting labour force development, by providing sound fiscal policy, supporting education and training, and creating the conditions that lead to a high quality of life. But it cannot meet the labour force challenge alone. Industry is a critical partner, in the areas of training, recruitment, compensation and benefits, and the building of safe and attractive work environments.

The Government of Alberta is committed to working with its public and private sector partners to understand and address labour market issues. An interdepartmental committee has been formed to:

- review forecasts of labour supply and demand, by industry and occupation
- compile a list of government actions being taken to respond to shortages
- identify and examine potential government strategies to further address labour market needs.

This report examines current labour market conditions and provides an outlook to 2005. It presents the Government of Alberta's strategy to support the development of the human resources essential to Alberta's future growth and prosperity.

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ALBERTA'S LABOUR FORCE

How tight is Alberta's labour market?

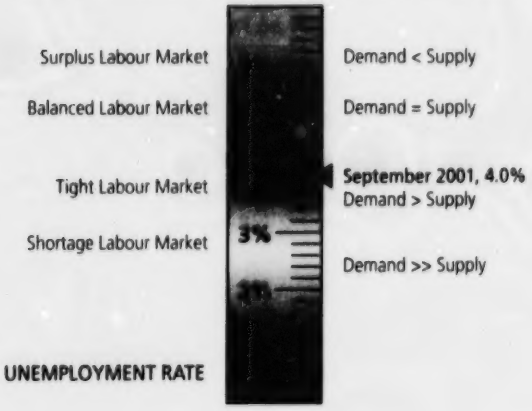
When demand for labour exceeds supply, the unemployment rate drops. When the unemployment rate moves below five per cent, the labour market is considered tight.

Alberta's unemployment rate has been on a downward trend since 1993, when it stood at nearly ten per cent. In 1999, it was 5.7 per cent; in 2000 it was 5.0 per cent; and as of September 2001, it was 4.0 per cent.

The situation is complicated by differences in labour supply across the various regions of the province. For example, in September 2001 the unemployment rate for Camrose-Drumheller was 3.0 per cent, while for Red Deer Region it was 5.4 per cent.

Other indicators of a tight labour market are an increase in unfilled job openings and pressure on wages. From 1999 to 2000, the help wanted index rose by about 25 per cent. Average weekly earnings increased in 2000 by 3.7 per cent over 1999.

Labour Market Thermometer



Two national surveys released in 2001 by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that nearly half of all small and medium-sized businesses in Canada consider a shortage of qualified labour a serious problem. The highest rates of concern were found in Manitoba (59 per cent), Alberta (55 per cent) and Ontario (51 per cent).

However, there are several sources of labour supply that currently face barriers which can hinder their full participation in the labour market. This includes Aboriginal persons, youth, older workers, persons with disabilities and immigrants.

Both the proportion of Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities who join the labour market and the proportion who obtain employment are significantly below the level of all Albertans.

Aboriginal persons have had unemployment rates more than double that of the general population. The 1996 Census figures show an unemployment rate of 17 per cent for Aboriginal persons compared to 6.0 per cent for all Albertans. The unemployment rate of the Aboriginal population on reserve was even higher at 27 per cent.

Youth also experience more difficulty in finding employment. In 2000, the average unemployment rate for Albertans aged 15 to 24 was 10.7 per cent, more than double the rate of 3.7 per cent for those aged 25 and older.

While older workers are less likely to experience job loss than younger workers, when they do lose their jobs they tend to remain unemployed for longer periods of time. In 2000, the average duration of unemployment among Alberta workers aged 45 and over was almost 24 weeks, compared to an average of 13 weeks for the labour force as a whole.

A CLOSER LOOK

Even when the labour market is balanced overall, shortages can still occur in particular occupations.

Generally, an unemployment rate of three per cent or lower is considered as one indicator of a labour shortage.

Labour shortages have been apparent for a while in some occupations in the information and communication technology and health care industries. What is new is that shortages are now occurring across a broad range of industries and occupations.

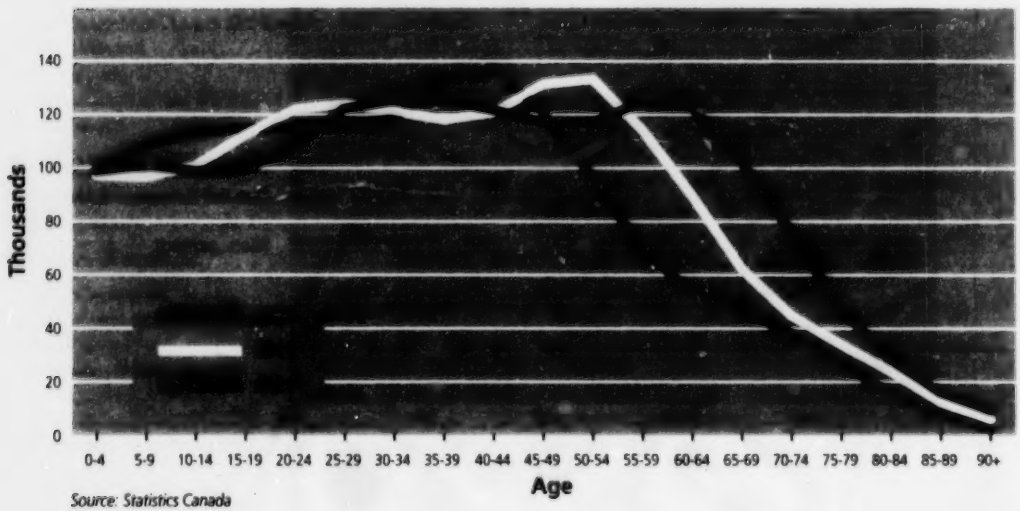
In 1995, only seven of 53 occupational groups experienced unemployment rates of below three per cent. In 2000, 25 of 53 occupational groups experienced such shortages, as shown in the table on page five (while this information is the most accurate that is currently available, it should be noted that for some occupational groups the sample size is limited).

Alberta's robust economy is the main reason for the strong growth in labour demand. Another is the intensified international competition for skilled labour.

Demographics are another contributing factor. As the "baby boomers" retire, they may be difficult to replace. While all sectors will be affected, those with older workers are particularly vulnerable, including agriculture, finance, public administration and community service. Occupations that will be most affected include health care workers and construction trades.

The impact of demographics becomes even more pronounced in the long-term. The following chart shows Alberta's population by age group in 2001, 2011 and 2021. Overall population growth is expected to slow sharply in the coming decades, although population growth in the older age groups is expected to increase with the aging of the baby boomers. As a result, it is likely that labour force growth in Alberta will decline in the long-term.

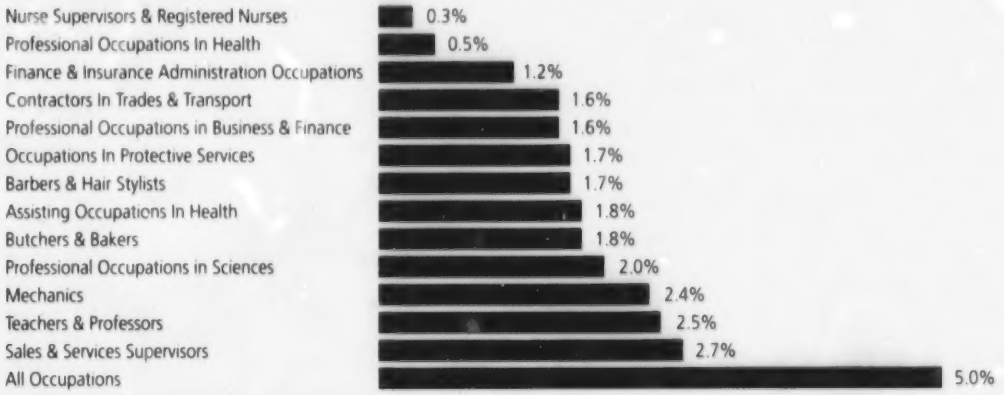
Alberta's Population Projection (2001, 2011, 2021)



Source: Statistics Canada

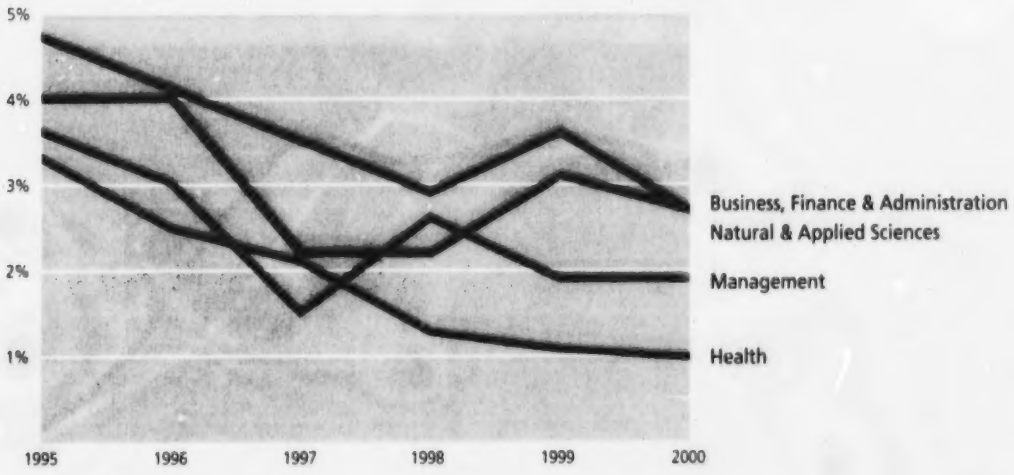
The average unemployment rate for selected occupations in Alberta in 2000, and unemployment rates for selected occupations since 1995 are shown in the following charts. Declines in unemployment rates since 1995 have resulted in unemployment rates by occupation as low as 0.3 per cent.

Unemployment Rate by Selected Occupations, Alberta 2000

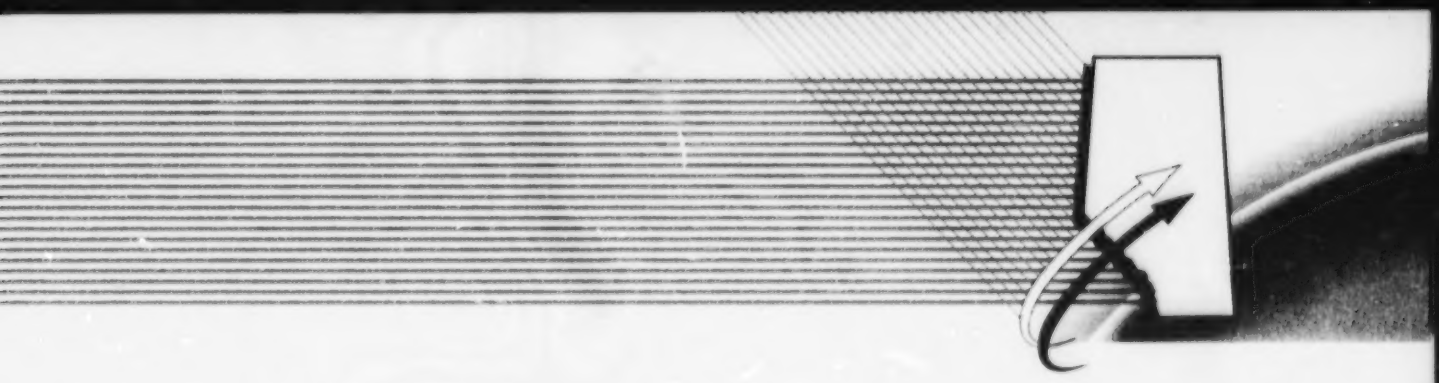

Nurse Supervisors & Registered Nurses 0.3%
Professional Occupations In Health 0.5%
Finance & Insurance Administration Occupations 1.2%
Contractors In Trades & Transport 1.6%
Professional Occupations in Business & Finance 1.6%
Occupations In Protective Services 1.7%
Barbers & Hair Stylists 1.7%
Assisting Occupations In Health 1.8%
Butchers & Bakers 1.8%
Professional Occupations in Sciences 2.0%
Mechanics 2.4%
Teachers & Professors 2.5%
Sales & Services Supervisors 2.7%
All Occupations 5.0%

Source: Calculated From Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey Data

Unemployment Rate, Selected Occupations Alberta, 1995 - 2000



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey



Unemployment Rate by Occupational Group, Alberta 2000

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS - UNEMPLOYMENT RATE		
Management Occupations	Less than 3%	More than 3%
Senior Management Occupations		✔
Specialist Managers	✔	
Managers in Retail Trade, Food & Accommodation	✔	
Other Managers, Not Elsewhere Classified	✔	
Business, Finance & Administrative Occupations		
Professional Occupations in Business & Finance	✔	
Finance & Insurance Administrative Occupations	✔	
Secretaries		✔
Administrative & Regulatory Occupations	✔	
Clerical Supervisors	✔	
Clerical Occupations		✔
Natural & Applied Sciences & Related Occupations		
Professional Occupations in Natural & Applied Sciences	✔	
Technical Occupations Related to Natural & Applied Sciences		✔
Health Occupations		
Professional Occupations in Health	✔	
Nurse Supervisors & Registered Nurses	✔	
Technical & Related Occupations in Health	✔	
Assisting Occupations in Support of Health Services	✔	
Occupations in Social Science, Education, Government & Religion		
Professional Occupations - Law, Social Services, Religion & Government	✔	
Teachers & Professors	✔	
Technical Occupations in Law, Social Services, Education & Religion	✔	
Occupations in Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport		
Professional Occupations in Art & Culture		✔
Technical Occupations In Art, Culture, Recreation & Sport		✔
Sales & Service Occupations		
Sales & Service Supervisors	✔	
Wholesale, Technical, Insurance, Real Estate Sales Occupations	✔	
Retail Salespersons & Sales Clerks		✔
Cashiers		✔

OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS - UNEMPLOYMENT RATE		
Sales & Service Occupations (continued)	Less than 3%	More than 3%
Chefs & Cooks		✔
Occupations in Food & Beverage Service		✔
Occupations in Protective Services	✔	
Occupations in Travel Accommodation & Attendants in Recreation		✔
Childcare & Home Support Workers		✔
Sales & Services Occupations, Not Elsewhere Classified		✔
Barbers & Hairstylists	✔	
Cleaners & Janitors		✔
Butchers & Bakers	✔	
Food Counter & Kitchen Helpers		✔
Service Station Attendants & Grocery Clerks		✔
Other Elemental Services & Sales Occupations		✔
Trades, Transportation & Equipment Operators & Related Occupations		
Contractors & Supervisors in Trades & Transportation	✔	
Construction Trades		✔
Stationary Engineers, Power Station Operators & Electrical & Telecommunications	✔	
Machinists, Metal Forming, Shaping & Erecting		✔
Mechanics	✔	
Other Trades, Not Elsewhere Classified		✔
Heavy Equipment & Crane Operators Inc. Drillers		✔
Transportation Equipment Operators & Related Workers		✔
Trades Helpers, Construction & Transport Labourers		✔
Occupations Unique to Primary Industry		
Occupations Unique to Agriculture	✔	
Occupations Unique to Other Primary Industry		✔
Primary Production Labourers		✔
Occupations Unique to Processing, Manufacturing & Utilities		
Supervisors in Manufacturing	✔	
Machine Operators in Manufacturing		✔
Assemblers in Manufacturing		✔
Labourers in Processing, Manufacturing & Utilities		✔
TOTAL	**25**	**28**

Source: Calculated from Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey Data

TOWARDS 2005

LABOUR FORECASTS

To predict the overall labour situation to 2005, forecasts for employment growth and labour supply growth need to be considered.

Several organizations, including governments, financial institutions and research firms such as the Conference Board of Canada and Infometrica, produce economic forecasts that include projections of employment growth. Under these forecasts, the number of new jobs predicted to be added to Alberta's economy by 2005 ranges from 154,000 to 283,000. The Government of Alberta's economic strategy, *Get Ready Alberta: Strengthening the Alberta Advantage*, calls for the creation of 295,000 new jobs by 2005.

The Labour Force Planning Committee predicts that Alberta's labour force will grow by between 2.0 and 2.2 per cent per year from 1999 to 2005. This prediction is based on the current structure of Alberta's population, interprovincial migration and immigration trends and labour force participation trends. This represents the addition of between 198,000 and 242,000 people to the labour supply.

With different forecasts come different projections for the labour market situation in the future. While economic forecasts on the overall balance of the supply and demand for labour in Alberta are mixed, many point to increasingly tight labour markets across the province.

The forecasts and targets depend on many factors. For example, demand for labour can be affected by changes in energy prices and the performance of the U.S. economy.

Because economic and labour market conditions in Alberta and elsewhere are subject to change, there is a need for flexible, adaptable strategies for labour market planning and development.

OCCUPATIONAL FORECASTS

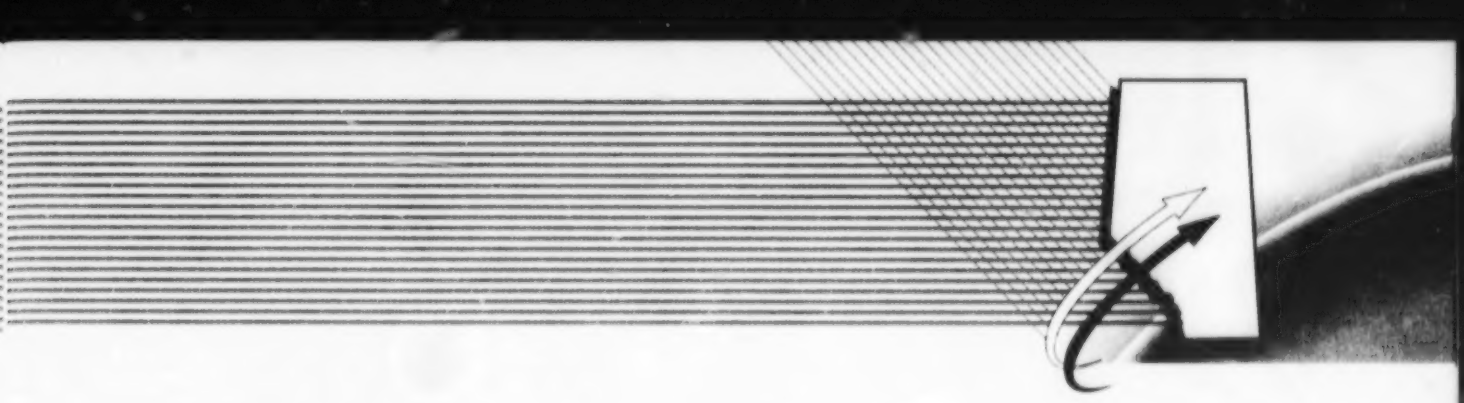
While the forecasts point to a wide range of possible scenarios regarding the overall balance of labour, there is general agreement that labour shortages will continue or emerge in many occupational groups over the next few years.

The Government of Alberta has consulted with key stakeholder organizations. These organizations have agreed that while shortages can be found in many sectors, they are expected to be especially severe in health care, information and communications technology, and construction. Shortages are also being reported in some areas of primary agriculture, food processing and tourism/hospitality.

It is likely that tight labour market conditions will continue. Even if the overall labour supply is adequate, there may be an insufficient supply of workers with the right mix of skills. For example, finding workers with technical, employability (communications and teamwork) and management skills may be challenging.

In the future, most new jobs will require some post-secondary education. The most recent occupational projections predict that almost 60 per cent of all new jobs created between 2000 and 2005 will require some form of learning beyond high school.

Overall, specific skill and occupational shortages are becoming more widespread and severe, and are expected to continue.



SOURCES OF NEW WORKERS

There are three main sources for new additions to the labour force: Alberta's education system, in-migration from other provinces and immigration from other countries.

- **The Education System:** Enrolment in Alberta's post-secondary institutions continues to increase. Total system-wide full-load equivalent enrolment was 119,500 in the 1999/2000 academic year (note: numbers are preliminary). With the exception of 1997, enrolment rose consistently throughout the 1990s in all sectors of the post-secondary system (universities, public colleges and technical institutes).

  Alberta has nine per cent of Canada's population and trains over 20 per cent of the country's apprentices. In 1999, there were 31,390 apprentices registered.

  Alberta's secondary school system also supplies the labour force with workers. However, job growth is strongest among those with post-secondary credentials. Between 1990 and 2000, employment increased by 45 per cent for people with university degrees, and by 52 per cent for those with post-secondary diplomas or certificates, while employment for those with less than a high school education decreased by 13 per cent.

- **In-migration:** Movement of Canadians to Alberta fluctuates with economic conditions here and in the rest of the country. Net interprovincial migration to Alberta peaked at around 40,000 in 1998, the highest level in the country. It declined to 13,985 in 1999, then increased to 21,951 in 2000.

- **Immigration:** Since peaking in the early 1990s, immigration to Alberta levelled off between 12,000 and 14,000 per year from 1996 to 1999. In 2000, immigration was 14,270. Immigrants coming to Alberta are highly skilled—40 per cent of working age immigrants arriving in 2000 held a university degree.

STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

Alberta's continued growth and prosperity requires a sufficient supply of appropriately skilled workers.

In the current labour market, it is important to use all talents available, including those of Aboriginal people, youth, older workers, persons with disabilities and immigrants. Older workers, for example, can become part of the solution to the skill shortage problem through emphasizing the advantages and potential economic impact of their extended labour force participation.

To address the needs of any one sector of the economy, the nature of the industry must be considered. The construction industry, for example, tends to be cyclical. Actions to meet its needs will focus to a greater degree on short-term solutions such as upgrading the skills of existing workers and promoting and expediting the processing of temporary work visas for immigrants. In comparison, the information and communications technology and health sectors face short and long term shortages. A mix of actions is needed to attract workers from elsewhere and train new workers.

The Government of Alberta's economic strategy, *Get Ready Alberta: Strengthening the Alberta Advantage*, identified making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit as a key direction. The advantages of coming to Alberta, or remaining to work, need to be promoted.

Many government actions support labour market initiatives. Some highlights are:

- personal income taxes have been reduced to give Alberta a relative advantage over other provinces, to increase the attractiveness of the province and to reduce the outflow of talented and skilled workers
- labour force planning is being co-ordinated across provincial departments to ensure that government responds efficiently and effectively to labour market needs
- information for employers on best practices will be developed and distributed to assist with recruiting and retaining skilled employees.

The Labour Force Planning Committee has identified three key strategies to meet the labour market needs of the future:

1. **increase the skill and knowledge levels of Albertans**
2. **increase the mobility of labour in Canada**
3. **increase the number of immigrants to Alberta.**

New actions under each of these strategies have been recommended and are now in the process of being implemented. All new actions are to be underway by the end of fiscal year 2005.

1. INCREASE THE SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF ALBERTANS

Commitment to life long learning is a critical component of strengthening the labour force. Partnership with industry groups and post-secondary institutions is essential. In addition, Albertans need information about, and sometimes assistance with, career planning and finding employment opportunities. Specific actions are also needed to make use of the skills of Albertans, including youth, older workers, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people and immigrants.

Highlights of Action Underway

- The Government of Alberta is working to reduce and remove barriers to employment and skills upgrading for youth, Aboriginal people and persons with disabilities through programs such as Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities.
- "Strengthening Relationships - The Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework", describes several strategies to address many of the employment barriers facing Aboriginal People. The Aboriginal Policy Initiative requires all Ministries to assist in the implementation of the Aboriginal Framework.
- The Workplace and Education Working Group of the Cross Ministry Seniors Policy Initiative is currently researching issues faced by older workers and will be making recommendations to government in the near future.
- The Alberta Learning Access Fund is creating more post-secondary spaces in high demand areas. In the fall of 2001, there will be 1,245 additional spaces in high priority fields including health care, information and communications technology, business and education, and increased training spaces for apprenticeships in the trades.
- Alberta Learning is developing policy and program responses to facilitate the recognition of the qualifications and skills of foreign trained immigrants in Alberta.
- Co-op and summer work experience placements with the provincial government provide valuable work experience to young Albertans.
- Information systems are being developed to monitor labour supply and demand. For example, the Health Workforce Information Network helps health authorities address workforce planning needs.
- Several departments are involved with industry sector studies, and gather industry input from labour force planning studies to predict future demands.
- The Alberta Youth Employment Strategy, a collaboration of Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) and Alberta Learning, helps youth prepare for work and manage the school-to-work transition. The Youth Connections program is part of this strategy.
- AHRE develops, publishes and promotes career, workplace and labour market information, both in print and on the Internet. It also operates the Career Information Hotline, which provides career advice, information and referrals through a toll-free, province-wide call centre.

- AHRE Regional Offices across the province deliver programs to help Albertans making career decisions or facing labour market transitions.
- AHRE develops and funds Labour Market Partnerships, to assist communities and industry sectors in identifying, developing and implementing labour force adjustment and human resource strategies.
- Alberta Learning works with industry associations, sectors and employers to identify trades shortages and develop appropriate training and recruiting strategies.
- Alberta Learning is working with education stakeholders to develop strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers, faculty and administrators.
- Campus Alberta involves the collaboration of learning providers to deliver quality learning, where and when Albertans need it, making the learning system more effective and responsive.
- Alberta Learning, along with other government departments, is working with Aboriginal organizations and industry to increase participation of Aboriginal people in apprenticeship programs.
- Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, through the Traditional Extension and Technology Transfer, 4H and Green Certificate programs, provides training in agriculture occupations. The Green Certificate program provides apprenticeship style training for technicians, supervisors and managers in seven agricultural production areas.
- Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development works with education institutions to increase awareness and understanding of careers in agriculture.
- Alberta Health and Wellness' Health Professions Act will allow more flexible health labour force deployment.
- Alberta Health and Wellness is working with stakeholders to examine and develop strategies to improve the quality of work life for health care workers.
- Alberta Economic Development is working with a committee of Alberta aerospace industry stakeholders to promote aerospace career opportunities to students in Alberta.
- Alberta Economic Development is working with Lakeland College and the welding industry to provide upgrading for journeyman welders in the use of state-of-the-art welding technology to meet a current critical shortage.
- The Federal Community Access Point Program provides public access to the Internet, improving access to the information and technology critical to our competitiveness. The Alberta Public Library Electronic Network provides 287 communities with access points for information including Internet access and in-person assistance. These sites are also linked to the Knowledge Network that connects Alberta's colleges and universities.

New Actions

In partnership with stakeholders, the Labour Force Planning Committee will:

- Develop a data warehouse to provide easier access to credible, timely and consistent workplace, labour market and income support information.

- Place greater emphasis on additional occupational training in areas of labour market demand for Employment Insurance clients under the Labour Market Development Agreement.
- Encourage the federal government to increase the level of spending under Employment Insurance Part II to provide additional training support to a wider range of people.
- Improve the transitions of youth from school to work, with a focus on areas experiencing skill shortages.
- Develop and distribute an information resource that encourages employers to hire from non-traditional sources, such as persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people, youth, older workers, visible minorities and immigrants. This resource would also help employers prepare to manage a diversified workforce.

2. INCREASE THE MOBILITY OF LABOUR IN CANADA

Canadians in other provinces have historically been a source of new workers to Alberta.

Attracting new workers will require action to increase awareness of opportunities in Alberta and to reduce barriers to movement, such as differences in professional and occupational qualifications.

Highlights of Action Underway

- Provinces have committed to implementing the Agreement on Internal Trade and full labour mobility. The Agreement aids in the recognition of credentials across provinces, making it easier for skilled workers to follow demand.
- Alberta Learning has worked with other provinces to expand the Interprovincial Standards (Red Seal) program from 29 to 44 trades since 1995. The Red Seal program enables greater mobility of journeymen throughout Canada by allowing qualified trades persons to practice their trade in any province or territory in Canada where the trade is designated as a Red Seal trade.
- The Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website provides accurate and current information on occupations, labour market forecasts, and job opportunities.
- The Alberta Government has established the Ministry of Innovation and Science as well as two foundations for research to maintain and encourage stable long-term research investments. These efforts benefit Alberta's educational institutions by attracting, training and retaining world-class researchers.

New Actions

In partnership with stakeholders, the Labour Force Planning Committee will:

- Develop a campaign to inform out-of-province workers about the Alberta Advantage, including the high quality of life.
- Encourage stronger efforts by provincial and territorial governments, and provincial and national regulatory bodies, to ensure compliance with the requirements of the labour mobility chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade.
- Explore developing a cooperative arrangement among the federal government, the Government of Alberta and industry to encourage skilled workers in Canada to temporarily relocate to Alberta, to help meet short-term labour needs.

3. INCREASE THE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANTS

Additional immigration to Alberta is another key strategy to meet the increasing demand for skilled workers.

Attracting workers from other countries requires cooperation with the Government of Canada, which has primary jurisdiction over immigration. It also requires promotion of Alberta to skilled workers and professionals in other countries, and recognition of their qualifications.

Highlights of Action Underway

- Alberta supports the federal government's Software Development Workers Pilot Project, which allows faster immigration processing for workers destined for jobs in the information and communications technology sector.
- Alberta Learning is working with the federal government to:
  - influence selection criteria for immigrants, to better match Alberta's labour market priorities
  - increase the level of, and reduce the processing time for, immigrants to Canada, allowing Canada and Alberta to be more competitive in attracting highly skilled workers
  - facilitate the entrance of temporary foreign workers in the trades and other sectors.
- Alberta Economic Development's Business Immigration Program strives to attract business immigrants/investors to Alberta.
- Alberta Economic Development and Alberta Innovation and Science are coordinating initiatives to attract non-Canadian foreign workers and Canadian high technology workers employed in California to Alberta.

New Actions

In partnership with stakeholders, the Labour Force Planning Committee will:

- Develop a campaign to attract out-of-country workers, emphasizing the Alberta Advantage, including the high quality of life.
- Encourage professional bodies to offer qualifying exams in foreign countries, allowing skilled workers to arrive with recognized credentials.
- Introduce a pilot Alberta Provincial Nominee Program, a targeted out-of-country recruitment program to attract workers in key occupations experiencing shortages.
- Promote awareness and better use of the temporary foreign worker program, and faster processing of temporary work visas.
- Support the expansion of foreign students' work opportunities while in Canada.

TARGETS 2005

The Labour Force Planning Committee has identified three result areas for 2005, with indicators and targets for each. Progress towards the targets, as well as the appropriateness of the indicators, will be reviewed annually.

Intended Results	Indicator	Current Situation	2005 Target
Reduce the number of unfilled vacancies.	Number of occupational groups with a skill shortage, as defined by a rate of unemployment of below 3%.	As of the end of 2000, 25 out of 53 occupational groups had less than 3% unemployment.	The number of occupational groups with a skill shortage reduced to 18.
Increase the skill level of Albertans.	Percentage of Albertans that have completed a high school education.	In 2000, 89.7% of Albertans aged 25-34 have completed a high school education.	The population aged 25-34 that has completed a high school education will be at or exceed 90%.
	Percentage of Albertans that have completed post-secondary education.	In 2000, 56.1% of Albertans aged 25-34 have completed post-secondary learning.	The population aged 25-34 having completed a post-secondary education will be at or exceed 62%.
	Percentage of employers satisfied with the skills of recent post-secondary graduates.	In 1999/00 employer satisfaction with the skills of recent post-secondary graduates was: • Degree programs 84% • Diploma programs 89% • Certificate programs 83%	The level of employer satisfaction with the skills of recent post-secondary graduates will be at or exceed 90%, for degree, diploma and certificate programs.
Sufficient total net migration to Alberta to meet needs of labour market.	Number of total net migrants to Alberta. This includes both provincial migration and international immigration.	Average annual total net migration from 1992 to 1999 is estimated at 23,000. Net migration for calendar year 2000 is estimated at 30,000 people.	Total net migration to Alberta over the four years 2001/02 to 2004/05 of 130,000 people.

IMPORTANT PARTNERS

The Government of Alberta shares responsibility for addressing labour market needs with its partners, such as the Government of Canada and industry.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

The federal government plays a role in labour market supply issues by:

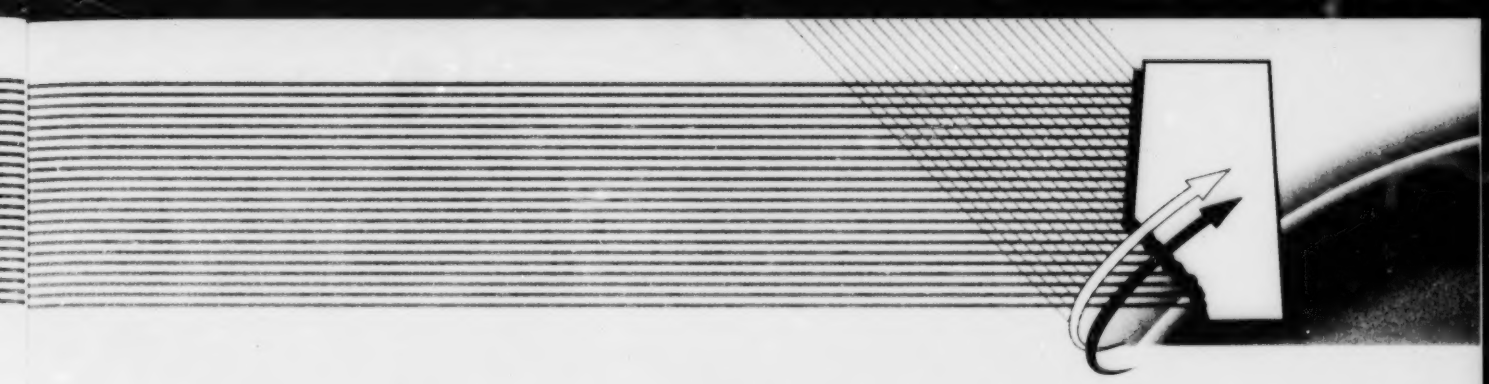
- providing funding to the provinces and territories for post-secondary education programs through the Canada Health and Social Transfer (formerly Established Programs Financing)
- supporting learners through student financial assistance measures
- funding provinces to help provide upgrading and training programs for Employment Insurance clients (through Labour Market Development Agreements)
- funding assistance to provinces for employment and training programs for persons with disabilities (through the Employability Assistance for Persons with Disabilities program)
- supporting Aboriginal people pursuing education and training
- providing information about the demand for labour and the opportunities to acquire skills
- providing short-term work experience for students during the summer months, recent graduates of post-secondary programs and those experiencing labour market difficulties
- administering final processing and admittance of temporary foreign workers and permanent skilled workers into the country
- encouraging industrial sectors to assess and respond to their own skill requirements
- conducting research into a broad range of labour market issues and compiling "best practices" documents.

INDUSTRY

Through associations and networks, and in partnership with government, industry has an important role to play in identifying skill shortages and strategies to resolve them.

As employers, industry has a significant role in attracting and retaining a skilled workforce in Alberta. Employers can:

- ensure wages are competitive
- provide better work benefits and rewards, such as improved medical/retirement plans, stock purchase plans/profit sharing schemes, signing/performance /referral bonuses, paid professional fees/memberships
- improve workplace features such as providing a challenging work environment, high speed Internet access, on-site day care, access to fitness facilities and employment security
- offer flexible work arrangements, such as working from home and options to balance family and work commitments
- commit to professional development of employees, such as supporting apprentices, mentoring programs and both formal and on-the-job training
- consider different approaches and work place accommodations to allow recruitment and employment of a broader range of potential employees, such as older workers, youth in work experience programs, persons with disabilities and minorities
- offer to find employment for spouses of potential recruits, especially in rural areas
- recognize the quality of the work environment as an important component of attracting and retaining workers.



CONCLUSION

The labour market outlook in this document is based on the most accurate available forecasts, but these can change. Fluctuations in any number of factors—U.S. economic performance, tax reforms in other provinces, interest rates, the Canada/U.S. exchange rate, and energy and other commodity prices—can influence future labour markets. The Labour Force Planning Committee will regularly monitor, update and respond to our dynamic labour market.

Similarly, targets are based on the current situation. Adjustments to both the targets and the government's strategies may be needed as external factors change.

The Government of Alberta, as part of its commitment to continued growth and prosperity, recognizes that Alberta's labour market must be competitive in the global market. We must enhance the ability of all Albertans to participate in the labour force, maintain this province as an attractive place to live and work, and reduce barriers to employment and the movement of workers. The strategies in this paper address those needs, to ensure that Alberta is prepared for growth, now and in the future.

For further information on labour market programs and services, please contact the Alberta Human Resources and Employment's Career Information Hotline, throughout Alberta at 1-800-661-3753, or in Edmonton at 422-4266. Further labour market information, including occupational forecasts, is available by logging on to ***www.alis.gov.ab.ca***, while information on labour market programs and services is available on-line at ***www.gov.ab.ca/hre***.